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Gifted Education Program Structures in Erie County: Lake Shore Schools

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Abstract

Research in the field of gifted and talented education has been general and focused on government policy and general practices. There has been a lack of focus on the structure of existing programs. The current research aims to determine whether parents and students receiving services through gifted education programs are satisfied with their educators, program structure, and quality of education received. Parents and students completed paper surveys and commented on facets of the ALPHA (Advanced Level Program for Heightened Achievement) program in Lake Shore Central School District. Overall, responses were very positive, though parents cited some changes they would like to see made to the program. Further research should be conducted in multiple districts to determine what parents and students expect to gain from gifted programming, and what they feel they are actually gaining.

Why we should care about gifted and talented education

"In fall 2011, over 49.4 million students" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 1) attended public schools. According to conservative (in that they identify relatively small groups of students) definitions of giftedness such as Lewis Terman's, the top one percent of our students, as determined by their scores on traditional intelligence tests, should be considered gifted (Renzulli, 1998). Thus, we could be providing services to 4.94 gifted million students each year. Realistically, however, of the thirty states that have and share data on the number of identified gifted students in their schools, only 2,406,755 are identified as gifted (National Association for Gifted Children, 2011). If we average this number over thirty states and take it as the national average, we are potentially only identifying 4.01 million gifted students, far shy of the 4.94 million students predicted by c*onservative* definitions of giftedness. Estimates range as high as six percent of the student population (National Association for Gifted Children, 2008).

In order to deliver services to these students, we must first recognize that gifted individuals have strengths across disciplines, and in disciplines we may not initially consider. As educators, we have the opportunity to support gifted students in realizing and cultivating their giftedness, but we first need a clear view of where that giftedness exists. In *Outliers* (2008), Malcolm Gladwell shares a theory of truly successful individuals. Researchers, he says, "have settled on what they believe is the magic number for true expertise: ten thousand hours." (Gladwell, 2008, p. 40) In

other words, an expert in any field, be it art or hockey, becomes an expert after ten thousand hours of practice. Gladwell shares the story of Bill Gates who, in his years of schooling, had unprecedented access to a computer mainframe that allowed him to get in his ten thousand hours before graduating from high school. It would of course be unreasonable to think that we could provide this type of opportunity to every single child that walked through the doors of our public schools, but we should at least make an effort to provide children with gifts the opportunity to explore their strengths while in school, if for no other reason than that our schools have a responsibility to educate each of our nation's children to the best of their ability.

Approximately twenty percent of school dropouts annually are intellectually gifted (Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education, 2012). Although we don't know the reason for this high percentage, we can certainly surmise that these students are simply bored and unchallenged. In classrooms all around the country, intellectually gifted students, whether identified as such or not, are sitting in their classrooms bored and frustrated because their teachers don't have the resources, both material and intellectual, to service them in the best way possible (National Association for Gifted Children, 2008). In fact, in a 2008 survey of teachers (National Association for Gifted Children), 77 percent of respondents believed that advanced students in their classes get neglected while teachers focus on low students' proficiency, as federal policy dictates. It is certainly a shame that teachers recognize this fact but neither federal nor state education policy attempts to correct it, in most cases.

Definitions of Giftedness

Federally, while there is no mandate for gifted education, the Javits Act (1988) defines gifted and talented students as

> children and youths who give evidence of higher performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools in order to develop such capabilities fully.

This definition is interesting because it encompasses abilities in areas not traditionally considered in schools, but focuses only on the existence of high ability, not on any other facets of the student's achievement. Historically, this is not unique, though there is a range of definitions of giftedness today.

Definitions of giftedness range from the very conservative to very liberal to nonexistent, as seen in the NAGC's State of the States reports (2011). Conservative definitions focus solely on academic performance on standardized intelligence tests, thereby deemphasizing individual talents in areas not traditionally measured by things such as IQ tests (Renzulli, 1998).

Alternatively, some researchers have developed more liberal definitions of giftedness that broaden eligibility criteria and increase the number of students identified as gifted. Inclusion of these students in a definition of giftedness should increase the likelihood that these students will receive specific instruction that develops talents not addressed in the general curriculum. Definitions from individuals such as Joe Renzulli, one of the pioneers in gifted education, embrace

individuality within students and emphasize abilities and talents outside of the four major academic areas. Renzulli defines giftedness as a three-fold interaction of traits within an individual: above-average ability, task commitment, and creativity (Renzulli, 1998) [figure 1]. According to this definition, individuals' giftedness may be in math or cartooning or both, but the 'above-average ability' trait is not restricted to traditional academic areas. Additionally, individuals are not described as gifted if they only demonstrate one or two of these traits. Although one trait may be more prevalent than the other two, all are present in gifted individuals (Renzulli, 1998).

Renzulli's definition of giftedness is a result of what he sees as the two purposes of gifted education. According to Renzulli (1998),

> [t]he first purpose of gifted education is to provide young people with maximum opportunities for self-fulfillment through the development and expression of one or a combination of performance areas where superior potential may be present. The second purpose is to increase society's supply of persons who will help to solve the problems of contemporary civilization by becoming producers of knowledge and art rather than mere consumers of existing information. (p. 1)

There are two types of giftedness that exist in individuals according to Renzulli (1998): Schoolhouse giftedness and creative-productive giftedness. The first is how we think of traditionally 'smart' students. They do well in school, learn quickly, and benefit from quick pacing and, in some cases, compacted curricula that allow them to learn more than their peers in the same time frame. Since "IQ scores correlate only from .40 to .60 with school grades, they account for only 16-36% of the variance in" these grades, leading Renzulli to define a second type of giftedness

(Renzulli, 1998, p.1).

The second type of giftedness is much more in line with a liberal view, as it expands our idea of giftedness to encompass skills and talents outside of traditional intelligence and therefore includes more students. Creative-productive individuals, as the label suggests, create, rather than consume, ideas and products. This type of gifted individual drives the second part of Renzulli's purpose for gifted education.

It is important to consider the differences between these types of giftedness in relation to phases of life. In the school years, schoolhouse giftedness may be seen as more important because it is defined by the place where the child spends most of his or her time. Surely, we hear plenty about these children. They win merit scholarships, science fairs, and math contests; they correctly spell *cymotrichous* and win the Scripps National Spelling Bee; they astound their teachers, peers, and parents with their ability to learn new information. After school, however, we don't often hear about these 'book smart' children's work. We hear about the creative geniuses behind genetic mapping, new programming languages like Java, sculptors, video game graphics designers, and innovative businesspeople. If we tend to hear more about the accomplishments of the creative-productive individuals, what are we and should we be doing to cultivate their creative productivity in school? As educators, we should strive to cultivate the potential in our gifted students, whether that potential lies in art, science, or anything in between.

Intelligence specialist Lewis Terman made the mistake of over-emphasizing traditional intelligence in predicting success in his decades-long study of the crème de la crème de la crème. Terman selected what he considered to be the students with the highest potential from California's public elementary schools. After following them into adulthood, however, he concluded "'that intellect and achievement are far from perfectly correlated.'" (Gladwell, 2008). In fact, two students that Terman had ruled out of his elite group due to low IQ scores had gone on to be Nobel laureates whereas none of his select students had.

Many states have definitions similar to the Javits definition, and some similar to Renzulli's definition. A great number of state definitions incorporate the qualification that the needs of gifted students are not traditionally met in the general classrooms. New York State's definition of giftedness, for example, is nearly identical to the Javits definition:

> the term "gifted pupils" shall mean those pupils who show evidence of high performance capability and exceptional potential in areas such as general intellectual ability, special academic aptitude and outstanding ability in visual and performing arts. Such definition shall include those pupils who require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their full potential. (New York State Legislature, 2012, p. 1)

Regardless of this recognition in state definitions, many states do not provide access to appropriate services outside of the classroom as they do for students with ADHD or autism.

The state of Gifted Education Nationally

Despite such legislation as IDEA 2004 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and the proposed TALENT (To Aid Gifted and High-Ability Learners by Empowering the Nation's Teachers) act, there is no federal mandate for gifted education. There is also no definition, at this level, of what giftedness is, outside of the Javits Act. While at least forty-one states define giftedness, there is a lack of consistency among the definitions, and teachers therefore have no standard measure by which to determine students' giftedness, and state and local education agencies have no motivation to provide identification or services to students who are gifted.

Federal education law focuses almost entirely on low-performing students in an effort to bring all students to proficiency, leading, as stated previously, to teachers neglecting high-performing students in their classrooms. IDEA 2004 cites thirteen categories of disability under which to identify students with special needs, but there is no category for gifted students. Many would argue that giftedness is a special need in the same way that autism or dyslexia is. For example, the Council for Exceptional Children advocates for the education of students with special needs and students with gifts and talents, recognizing that both populations require specific educational practices and attention to academic needs (Council for Exceptional Children, 2011). Legislation such as Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind only furthers the idea for teachers that their focus should be on low-, not high-performing students.

The current standardization of curriculum through the Common Core standards, accepted so far by 45 states and four territories (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011), also leaves little room for focus on high-achieving students. Although in theory these standards are a step in the right direction, as they call for high, consistent standards nationwide, teachers, for the next few years, will be focused on changing their lessons to meet these new standards. This new focus for teachers will leave even less time for extension and expansion of the curriculum, and may eliminate opportunities for creativity in the classroom that are tailored specifically to students' needs and interests.

The State of the States

Every two years, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) collects and publishes data about gifted education across the country. Through a lengthy survey completed by willing state agencies, NAGC determines the prevalence of services, funding, definitions, and teacher training in gifted education nationally.

Each year, the report shows discrepancies between the states in all of the aforementioned areas. For example, in the 2010-2011 school year, 31 of 45 reporting states reported mandating gifted and talented education. Of these 31, 28 mandate identification and 26 mandate services (NAGC, 2011). This number is down from 35 states in 1996.

There is also a lack of oversight from state education agencies, which leads to a lack of consistency between and monitoring of local education agencies. Monitoring and auditing of local programs is not law in twenty reporting states. Fourteen states do not collect data that tell how many students are identified as gifted or are receiving gifted programming (NAGC, 2011). Without consistency at the local level, we cannot hope to move toward consistency at the state level without a great deal of work.

Between the 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 State of the States reports, fourteen states reported decreasing funding for gifted and talented education. In fact, a lack of funding was listed by reporting states as one of things that have a negative effect on gifted and talented education. Others include a lack of federal recognition, continued site-based decision making, a lack of compliance and monitoring on the part of local education agencies, a lack of state mandates, and the federal focus on struggling learners (NAGC, 2011).

These issues correlate with the most highly ranked areas in need of attention in the states' reports. The only area which the majority of states listed as "most in need of attention" (NAGC, 2011) was the need for a national mandate. Areas listed by states as "in need of attention" are pre-service training, funding for professional training, funding for programming, mastery of disciplines among general education teachers, curriculum that differentiates standards upwards, inclusion of underrepresented students, and assessment of academic growth (NAGC, 2011).

The trends we see in these responses can and should be seen as a call to action, as they concentrate on three main areas: mandate/funding, teacher training, and recognition of gifted students as is done for special education students. These three areas, in fact, were the focus of two education bills introduced into New York State Legislature in 2011-2012: A03281/S03301 and A05506/S01272. Unfortunately, they were read on the floor and referred to the education committee in the beginning of both 2011 and 2012 (New York State Assembly, 2012).

What does this look like in New York State?

Legislatively, there is no mandate in New York State for identification, services, or funding for gifted education. This lack of mandate makes the state stand out in comparison to neighboring states such as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Connecticut, all of whom mandate gifted education (NAGC, 2011).

Because the state has not made gifted education a priority, there is no central database that tells parents which school districts specifically service gifted students. This has also led to a lack of equity between school districts. Gifted students in rural Orleans and Cattaraugus counties, for instance, do not have access to gifted education while students in the more populous suburban districts of Kenmore-Tonawanda and Williamsville in Erie County do. The New York City public schools require services for gifted students, something they can justify, where smaller districts cannot, due to the sheer size of the district and the potential number of gifted students served (New York City Department of Education, 2012). Coupled

with a direct lack of services for gifted students, some rural districts do not even have the resources to provide honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or accelerated coursework for gifted students, further limiting their ability to achieve at their highest potential.

This lack of district resources for independent programming at gifted specialists could be easily overcome if the state were to mandate pre-service coursework on gifted pupils for future teachers. Because general education teachers do not have the background knowledge needed to service these students, when they encounter them in the general classroom, they don't know what to do. If all teachers were trained in this area, we could make some headway in providing independent learning opportunities and extensions to the general curriculum without having to pull students out of class or provide them with special educators and programs to meet their needs. Nationally, only six states mandate pre-service training in gifted and talented education for all teachers (NAGC, 2011). Although some special education textbooks such as Marilyn Friend's *Special Education: Contemporary Perspectives for School Professionals* (2007) include chapters on gifted pupils (chapter 15), professors and education departments can choose not to include these chapters in the coursework because of this lack of mandate for pre-service training. Simply including such coursework in pre-service classes would enrich our resource base in teachers and give them the tools to better educate gifted students in their classrooms.

New York State does provide a certification extension for teachers in gifted education. The coursework to attain this extension, however, is only available at fourteen campuses statewide, and coursework ranges from nine to thirty credit hours (New York State Education Department, 2012). This indicates a lack of consistency throughout the state as to what special knowledge teachers need in order to service these students, and a lack of value on this knowledge as well, as there are 474 institutions of higher learning in the state (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

In an effort to rectify these issues within the state, there were two bills in New York State legislation in the 2010-2011 legislative year mandating the following: a mandate and initial funding for gifted education statewide, recognition for twice-exceptional students (those students identified as gifted and also as having a disability as characterized by IDEA), and a mandate and initial funding for pre-service teachers to learn how to educate gifted students.

Research in Gifted Education

Despite a lack of mandate at the federal level, and inconsistency throughout and within states, some groups have remained focused on improving the state of gifted education nationally. Since 1990, researchers at the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) have been focused on building the research base in regard to "theory-based models of identification, alternative assessment, programming, evaluation, professional development, curriculum, and intelligence"

(Neag Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, 2012). Currently, NRC/GT is working on a five-year plan to identify "what works in gifted education" (Neag Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, 2012). Researchers are working with schools to implement math and reading units in third grade classrooms to determine the effectiveness of identification, instruction, and assessment techniques.

These units are tailored to students' instructional needs; "emphasize conceptual thinking, real-world disciplinary inquiry, and problem solving; assess learning needs of students; and help students acquire increasing levels of expertise." (Neag Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, 2012, p. 1) The focuses on individual students and their achievements and assessing the learning needs of these students are tenets of special education that are being directly applied to gifted students in this context.

Two researchers at NRC/GT, Renzulli and Sally Reis, have developed the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) for use in schools with gifted students. For over twenty years, more than 2500 schools have implemented SEM with their gifted and non-gifted students, discovering that the model is effective with students at many achievement levels (Neag Center for Gifted and Talented Development, 2012).

Existing gifted programming functions in three general structures: pull-out, push-in, and mixed. These general structures exist on a continuum of service structures,

much like in special education (National Association for Gifted Children, 2008). In the pull-out model, students identified as gifted are taken out of the general classroom to a separate location, whether another classroom or another building, to work with a gifted and talented specialist. Conversely, in the push-in model, the specialist visits the general classroom to work either with identified students or the student population as a whole. Some programs in which the specialist works with all students identify as enrichment programs, not programs for the gifted.

Alternatively, schools may implement the mixed model, also sometimes referred to as enrichment, where identified students are pulled out of class, but the specialist also visits general classrooms to work with all students. Donald Treffinger's Levels of Service Model, for instance, gives four levels through which all students are provided gifted or enriched programming. The levels range from all students (Level 1) to very student-centered and individualized projects for few students at Level 4 (Treffinger, 1998). Program structure varies due to state policy (National Association for Gifted Children, 2011), district and school resources, and individual needs of students (National Association for Gifted Children, 2008).

Current Research Questions

Although Reis and Renzulli's current work aims to create programs that effectively educate our students, this research does not look at programs currently in existence. Other research, such as that of the National Association for Gifted Children, simply does a survey of state policies, not focusing on what is actually occurring in classrooms. The current research looks at existing programs to determine whether

educators are providing parents and students with meaningful gifted programming. The research aims to determine whether parents and students report higher satisfaction with pull-out or push-in program services.

The focus of this research is on Erie County because it is generally representative of the rest of New York State and, potentially, the rest of the Rust Belt, which runs from Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan through Upstate New York. Erie County is home to Buffalo, one of the 'big five' cities in New York State, as well as numerous suburbs and rural communities, giving a holistic view of American school districts. According to the 2010 U.S. Census data, the size of each racial group is approximately the same, in comparison to total population, in each of the counties containing the 'big five' cities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Fiscally, all 'big five' cities are struggling, and their school districts are largely dependent on these struggling budgets. In terms of age distribution (under/over 18) and gender distribution, Erie County is nearly identical to both New York State and the country as a whole.

Unfortunately, of thirty-two public school districts in Erie County, only fourteen offer some sort of enrichment or gifted and talented programming [table 1]. Of those, three do not specifically identify students as gifted in order to receive services from the program. For the purposes of this research, then, there were eleven viable districts. Of these eleven, however, only one district, Lake Shore, agreed to participate in the research.

Methodology

Research began by searching school districts' websites and contacting district personnel to determine whether the district provided services for gifted students. Two districts self-reported eliminating programs for the gifted and talented at their schools in recent years. Many of the eleven districts, despite having programs, were unwilling to let in outside researchers because of internal program evaluations that were occurring. [Many district personnel were very unreliable in communication, which was a large barrier to soliciting participating districts.]

In the Lake Shore Central School District (also known as Evans-Brant), however, district personnel and the gifted and talented specialist were very supportive of program evaluation. The ALPHA (Advanced Level Program for Heightened Achievement) Program at the three Lake Shore elementary schools provides services to approximately one hundred students in grades three through five (P. Seibold, personal communication, November 2011). Students are also provided services through pull-out and push-in programs in the middle school grades, but these students were not included in the research because they were not being serviced at the time of surveying due to the absence of their educator.

Services for students in grades three through five are typical for those districts in the county that do provide services to gifted students, though some districts (Amherst, Buffalo, Clarence, East Aurora, Frontier, Kenmore-Tonawanda, Springville-Griffith, Sweet Home, and Williamsville) begin some sort of gifted

services in Kindergarten. Services in the lower grades are generally push-in, with pull-out structures for older students. Williamsville, North Tonawanda, Gowanda, and Frontier also provide services to students in the middle grades. For secondary students, however, "gifted" programming usually comes in the form of Advanced Placement, Honors, and/or International Baccalaureate classes and programs.

The ALPHA program at Lake Shore uses Renzulli's three-ring concept of giftedness to identify students for services (Seibold, 2012). Students in the second grade receive push-in services once a week, and students in the third through fifth grades receive pull-out services once a week, which is not atypical for service models.

Paper surveys for parents and students were distributed to serviced students via the gifted specialist with directions on how to complete and return them to the researcher. In total, 102 surveys were distributed each to parents and students. Both surveys were also available online. Both parent and student surveys contained questions about program structure, whether they would prefer access to more gifted educators, and what specific skills and knowledge students gained from the program. Student surveys also included information about students' desire to change the program structure, their feelings about pedagogy, and the volume of information received. Parent surveys, on the other hand, asked about overall satisfaction with the educator and program curriculum, as parents have less first-hand knowledge of what happens in the classroom.

Survey responses followed a Likert scale. For the purposes of statistical analysis, the responses were assigned the following values: strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, agree = 3, strongly agree = 4. Each of the response choices was explained in plain language in the participant information form so that parents had a consistent explanation of the response types for their students.

Results

Of 102 surveys sent out, 28 were returned. Curiously, no respondents chose to complete the survey online. We had a response rate of 27.451%, quite a bit higher than the ten percent return rate expected; professionals (Neubert, 2008; Ray, 2006) expect a return rate around ten percent, and certainly less than twenty percent. Only twenty parent responses and eighteen student responses were valid, however, due to improperly completed consent forms. Thus the following data includes responses from 19.608% of parents and 17.647% of students to whom services are provided.

Overall, quantitative responses from parents [table 2] and students [table 3] were homogeneous, with a few exceptions. Both parents (Mean = 3.4; SD = .503) and students (Mean = 3.667; SD = .767) reported satisfaction with the structure of the program, and students indicated that they would not like to change the program structure from pull-out to push-in (Mean = 1.706; SD = .772). Similarly, both parties also indicated satisfaction with their educator, students by approving of their teacher's pedagogy (Mean = 3.833, SD = .514), and parents holistically (Mean = 3.55;

SD = .605). Interestingly, there was no homogeneity in responses in regard to the number of gifted specialists students had access to (Student Mean = 2.444; Student SD = 1.097; Parent Mean = 3.2; Parent SD = .894). Though the parent mean was still positive, it was the lowest mean for all questions. This standard deviation of .894 was also the highest for all parent responses. One could assume, then, that if students are receiving the proper services from a talented individual, only one specialist is needed to meet our gifted students' needs.

The latter part of the survey addressed program curriculum. Respondents indicated the level to which they agreed that students were gaining skills and knowledge in each of six areas: problem-solving, critical thinking, engagement, expansion of general curriculum, new concepts that are not included in the general curriculum, and social skills. While parents agreed that students are gaining skills in all of these areas, primarily in problem-solving (Mean = 3.5; SD = .513) and critical thinking (Mean = 3.5; SD = .513), student responses were less positive in regard to expansion of general curriculum (Mean = 2.278; SD = .669) and increased social skills (Mean = 3; SD = .840). The only skill area that received responses of "strongly disagree" by either parent or student respondents was expansion of general education curriculum (students only, see statistics above).

Both groups also gave qualitative responses to questions 7g, 8, and 9 [see figures 2, 3], which gave more insight into what parents and students expected and gained from participation in the program. Parents indicated that their children gained

"sharing and cooperation" skills, self-confidence, creativity, and confidence. Responses gave the impression that the educator creates a positive learning environment where students have the freedom and luxury of thinking for themselves and living up to their own expectations, not those of people around them. Said one parent, my child "learn[s] how to deal with pressure from too much homework and trying to be perfect." According to another, "ALPHA has helped my son come 'out of his shell'. … We need more teachers like [Mrs. Seibold] and more programs like this." In the same vein, students said that they learn "how to be creative and not be shy" and "how fun learning is."

Despite the myriad positive comments, parents did have some changes they would like to see made to the ALPHA program. Multiple parents indicated that they desired for the specialist to spend more time focusing on students' individual areas of strength so that they were able to develop in these specific areas. Both parents and students indicated a desire for increased time in the program, either in the duration or frequency. One parent suggested that the program be "built into the curriculum so they wouldn't have to be pulled out of other classes," which would indicate a switch from pull-out to push-in program structure. A second parent indicated that her student missed material in class as a result of attending ALPHA, and the student's ALPHA time had been changed at her request because of it.

Cumulatively, responses from both parents and students were very positive. This data is inconclusive, however, due to the small sample and population size.

Limitations also exist because the data cannot be compared to that from parents and students in programs of the same and different structures, both within and out of district. Further research should be conducted to allow for comparisons between students in multiple schools in all three program structures.

Future Research

Due to the small sample size, and its concentration in a single district, the survey should be repeated in at least two other districts: one with a purely push-in approach, and one with a mixed approach across grade levels. Ideally, all eleven districts, from North Tonawanda to Eden, should be included to give comprehensive picture of what districts in the county do for gifted students. This comprehensive set of data would help to determine how well districts are determining and meeting the needs of gifted students and their families. We would then be able to work toward Reis and Renzulli's goal of determining "what works in gifted ed" (2012) for families in Erie County and hopefully across the country. A broader database would help in creating more in-depth surveys to further this goal and pursue federal support for gifted programming.

In response to variance among parents' unrestricted responses, a new survey should be constructed with two parts. First, parents will evaluate to what extent their children need certain supports and services. For instance, each parent will rank criteria from social skills and creativity to problem-solving and rote math skills according to how important this is in their child's educational experience. Second,

parents will rank the extent to which their child receives each of the same services. Such a survey would help determine how well programs are evaluating and meeting individual students' needs.

Ideally, including each and every program for gifted students statewide would give the best picture of which program structures provide parents and students the highest levels of satisfaction. In order to do this research, however, we must first know which districts provide such services to their students. For this reason, I am currently working on compiling a list of districts that provide services to their gifted students in specific programs. Such a database will also assist parents of such students who wish to move to a district where their children will be provided the services needed. Once finished, this database will be hosted by AGATE, Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education.

Other potential research questions include the following: How do staffing ratios compare in states that mandate and states that don't? How does time spent on gifted instruction vary between program structures? What curricula do gifted and talented educators use? What do students lose/gain by participating in gifted and talented programs? How is time used? How do teachers/administrators/districts/states evaluate programs? Are parents and administrators satisfied with program structure? What are per student costs (between structures, states that mandate/don't mandate)?

There is a lot of research that needs to be done in the field in order to determine how best to service these students. Only through collaboration between students, parents, teachers, administrators, and bureaucrats can we hope to do right by these students and help them to reach their potential. We must first begin by changing the national mindset about what gifted students are and what they need. Together, we can truly be sure that no child is left behind.

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Table 1: Districts in Erie County

District	Program?
Akron	No
Alden	No
Amherst	Yes
Buffalo	At Frederick Law Olmstead schools Three tiers of instruction
Cheektowaga	No
Cheektowaga-Maryvale	No- used to
Cheektowaga-Sloan	No
Clarence	CSWEP: Clarence School-wide Enrichment Program Renzulli Enrichment Model
Cleveland Hill	No
Depew	"Enrichment" (Cayuga Heights Elementary)
East Aurora	BOOST (Building on our students' talents) at Parkdale Elementary
Eden	REACH, grades 3-6
Frontier	SAIL (specialized approach to individualized learning) K-8
Gowanda	No
Grand Island	No
Hamburg	Cut district-wide 2011-12
Holland	No
Hopevale	
Iroquois	No
Ken-Ton	Creative Learning Applied to Special Strengths
Lackawanna	No
Lake Shore	ALPHA, grades 2-5 Advanced Level Program for Heightened Achievement
Lancaster	No
North Collins	No
North Tonawanda City Schools	1-8, 6 schools
Orchard Park	Spectrum Renzulli
Pioneer	No
Springville-Griffith Inst	Enrichment all classes grades k-5
Sweet Home	Enrichment

Tonawanda City	Enrichment 3-5
West Seneca	RtI model, also called multi-tiered systems of support
	Cut from budget for 2011-12
Williamsville	Gifted Programming Services K-8

Table 2: Parent Survey Responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
3- Structure			12	8	*3.4*	*.503*
4- Educator		1	7	12	*3.55*	*.605*
5- More Teachers		6	4	10	*3.2*	*.894*
6- Curriculum		1	11	8	*3.35*	*.587*
7a- Problem-solving			10	10	*3.5*	*.513*
7b- Critical Thinking			10	10	*3.5*	*.513*
7c- Engagement		1	10	9	*3.4*	*.598*
7d- More about general curriculum		2	7	11	*3.45*	*.686*
7e- New information not in gen ed curriculum		2	6	12	*3.5*	*.688*
7f- Social Skills		2	11	7	*3.25*	*.639*

Table 3: Student Survey Responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
2- Structure	1		3	14	*3.667*	*.767*
3- Change Structure	8	6	3		*1.706*	*.772*
4- Pedagogy		1	1	16	*3.833*	*.514*
5- More Teachers	4	6	4	4	*2.444*	*1.097*
6- Volume of Information		1	7	10	*3.5*	*.618*
7a- Problem-Solving		1	5	12	*3.611*	*.608*
7b- Critical Thinking			12	6	*3.333*	*.485*
7c- Interest			7	11	*3.611*	*.502*
7d- More about general curriculum	2	9	7		*2.278*	*.669*
7e- New Information not in gen ed curriculum		1	7	10	*3.5*	*.618*
7f- Social Skills		6	6	6	*3*	*.840*

Figure 1: Joseph Renzulli's Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness

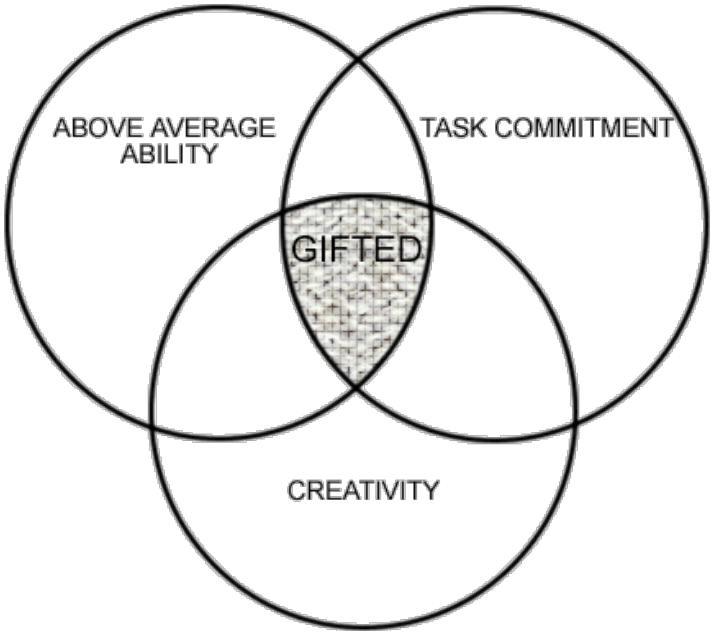

Figure 2: Parent Survey

You have the option to complete this survey online at http://brockport.edu/q/yoY. If you choose this option, please mail the survey back and tick the following box:

☐ I have chosen to complete this survey online

1. My child attends (school) _____

2. The structure of my child's gifted education/enrichment program is (if you are not sure, consult your child or your child's teacher):

Push-in Pull-out Mixed Other (please specify) _____

3. I am satisfied with the **structure** of my child's gifted education/enrichment program.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

4. I am satisfied with my child's gifted/enrichment educator(s).

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

5. I would prefer my child had access to more gifted/enrichment educators.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

6. I am satisfied with what my child learns in his/her gifted education/enrichment program.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

7. My child gains _____ from his/her gifted education/enrichment program.

a. Increased problem-solving skills (finding the best solution to a problem)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

b. Increased critical Thinking skills (evaluating the efficiency and appropriate nature of a given idea or solution)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

c. Increased engagement in the curriculum

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

d. Extended curricular knowledge

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

e. Knowledge of things outside the required curriculum

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

f. Better social skills

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

g. Other skills/knowledge: _____

8. What change would you like to see made to the structure of your child's program?

9. How are you involved in your child's gifted education/enrichment program?

Figure 3: Student Survey

You have the option to complete this survey online at http://brockport.edu/q/QvC. If you choose this option, please mail the survey back and tick the following box:

☐ I have chosen to complete this survey online

1. I attend (school) _____

2. I like that I get to go to my gifted education/enrichment teacher's classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

(Note: Whenever you read "gifted education/enrichment" think about the time you spend with this teacher, specifically)

3. I would rather have my gifted education/enrichment teacher come to my classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

4. I like the way my gifted education/enrichment teacher teaches.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

5. I would like to have more teachers who teach me things that my gifted education/enrichment teacher teaches me.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

6. I am happy with the amount of things I learn from my gifted education/enrichment program.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

7. I learn _____ from my gifted education/enrichment program.

a. Increased problem-solving skills (finding the best solution to a problem)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

b. Increased critical thinking skills (deciding how good an idea or solution is)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

c. Increased interest in what I'm learning

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

d. More about what I learn from my classroom teacher

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

e. Things that I don't learn from my classroom teacher

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

f. Better social skills

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

g. Other skills/knowledge: _____

8. What would you like to change about your gifted education/enrichment program?

9. How are your parents involved in your gifted education/enrichment program?